

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

| | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| 1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 27-04-2015 | | 2. REPORT TYPE Master of Military Studies Research Paper | | 3. DATES COVERED (From - To) September 2014 - April 2015 | |
| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Integration, collective identity, and assimilation in the French Foreign Legion | | | | 5a. CONTRACT NUMBER N/A | |
| | | | | 5b. GRANT NUMBER N/A | |
| | | | | 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER N/A | |
| 6. AUTHOR(S) Riou, Thomas, Major, French Army | | | | 5d. PROJECT NUMBER N/A | |
| | | | | 5e. TASK NUMBER N/A | |
| | | | | 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER N/A | |
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) USMC Command and Staff College Marine Corps University 2076 South Street Quantico, VA 22134-5068 | | | | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER N/A | |
| 9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A | | | | 10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) N/A | |
| | | | | 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) N/A | |
| 12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited. | | | | | |
| 13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES N/A | | | | | |
| 14. ABSTRACT While the integration process in the French Foreign Legion does not aim to deny individualities, it is a prerequisite to ensure the efficiency and cohesive feature of a troop made up with almost 150 nationalities. Moreover, building a strong collective identity, through artifacts and espoused values, is the best way for the Foreign Legion, as a cultural organization, to enable what can hardly be achieved only through institutional leverages: assimilation. While making legionnaires is a dynamic and time-based process, its drivers are certainly taught and enforced, but also culturally inherited and voluntarily endorsed. Therefore, to well understand this process, these goals and drivers need to be analyzed. Indeed, it is argued in this paper that while integration is the first and primary step of this process, with the end state to enable organizational and tactical efficiency, the structuration of a collective identity appears as the Gordian knot and the institutional desired objective since it opens the door to assimilation. The training as well as the daily life are designed to facilitate this identification. Albeit this process can have different results, depending on time and legionnaire's expectations and temperaments, the artifacts and espoused values developed throughout this process are its main guarantees of success | | | | | |
| 15. SUBJECT TERMS Foreign Legion, integration, assimilation, collective identity, cultural organization. | | | | | |
| 16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: | | | 17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU | 18. NUMBER OF PAGES 45 | 19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Marine Corps University/Command a |
| a. REPORT Unclass | b. ABSTRACT Unclass | c. THIS PAGE Unclass | | | 19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code) (703) 784-3330 (Admin Office) |

United States Marine Corps
Command and Staff College
Marine Corps University
2076 South Street
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TITLE:

**INTEGRATION, COLLECTIVE IDENTITY, AND ASSIMILATION IN THE
FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION.**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

AUTHOR:

**Major Thomas RIOU
French Foreign Legion (France)**

AY 14-15

Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member:

Michael A. Lewis

Approved: [Signature]

Date: 23 Apr 15

Oral Defense Committee Member: James H. Toyner Jr

Approved: [Signature]

Date: 23 APR 15

DISCLAIMER THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

QUOTATION FROM, ABSTRACTION FROM, OR REPRODUCTION OF ALL OR ANY PART OF THIS DOCUMENT IS PERMITTED PROVIDED PROPER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IS MADE.

Executive Summary

Title: Integration, collective identity, and assimilation in the French Foreign Legion.

Author: Major Thomas Riou, French Foreign Legion (France)

Thesis: While the integration process in the French Foreign Legion does not aim to deny individualities, it is a prerequisite to ensure the efficiency and cohesive feature of a troop made up with almost 150 nationalities. Moreover, building a strong collective identity, through artifacts and espoused values, is the best way for the Foreign Legion, as a cultural organization, to enable what can hardly be achieved only through institutional leverages: assimilation. While making legionnaires is a dynamic and time-based process, its drivers are certainly taught and enforced, but also culturally inherited and voluntarily endorsed.

Discussion: The French Foreign Legion is a world exception. As foreign soldiers have long been used as complementary forces for national armies, it is the only remaining Corps made up with foreigners legally bearing the arms of another country, France, even during peacetime. But making unity from such diversity, speaking of more than 140 different nationalities, and almost as numerous cultures, languages, and beliefs, is a crucial challenge for the Legion.

The integration process in the Foreign Legion is rarely discussed but nonetheless vital, as it intends to answer a key issue: how to create a common will out of this diversity and ensure that foreigners would be ready to die for a country that is not theirs? While the Foreign Legion often represents a new start, providing its legionnaires with a new identity, life, and family, as illustrated by its motto "*Legio Patria Nostra*," it insists in exchange on a golden rule, which is the primacy of community upon individuality.

This rule doesn't result in a negation of individuals but in a strong collective identification and the adhesion to a set of values and behaviors that make every legionnaire a part of a bigger whole, considering the group prior to himself. The legionnaire's status becomes the main salient identity.

Therefore, to well understand this process, its goals and drivers need to be analyzed. Indeed, it is argued in this paper that while integration is the first and primary step of this process, with the end state to enable organizational and tactical efficiency, the structuration of a collective identity appears as the Gordian knot and the institutional desired objective since it opens the door to assimilation. The training as well as the daily life are designed to facilitate this identification. Albeit this process can have different results, depending on time and legionnaire's expectations and temperaments, the artifacts and espoused values developed throughout this process are its main guarantees of success.

Conclusion: The cohesiveness of the French Foreign Legion relies on the ability to make unity from diversity, thus using a combination of integration, collective identity, and assimilation. While integration is a crucial step, the Legion needs to take advantage of its strong inherited culture to deepen the identification and to develop a strong collective identity, which is at the end the best guarantee of its cohesiveness.

Table of Contents

| | Page |
|---|------|
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | iii |
| PREFACE | iv |
| ABOUT THE PROCESS: BETWEEN INTEGRATION AND ASSIMILATION..... | 1 |
| Conceptual framework | 1 |
| A major cornerstone: the Amalgam in 1835 | 3 |
| Integration and the primacy of community | 5 |
| Beyond social integration, a cultural assimilation | 7 |
| About the level of assimilation..... | 9 |
| Desertion: integration failure?..... | 10 |
| PURPOSES AND FACTORS: A TAUGHT AND INHERITED PROCESS..... | 11 |
| A new start | 11 |
| Training and shaping..... | 13 |
| Norming: daily life, discipline, and hierarchy..... | 15 |
| Social pressure and socialization over time | 17 |
| The Képi Blanc and the importance of rites..... | 19 |
| A legionnaire testimony about the legion | 20 |
| COLLECTIVE IDENTITY: SHARED VALUES AND ARTIFACTS | 22 |
| The Legion is our country | 22 |
| Artifacts and celebrations in the Legion | 23 |
| Physical identification: tattoos in the Legion..... | 25 |
| Romanticism in the Legion | 26 |
| CONCLUSION | 27 |
| ENDNOTES..... | 28 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 30 |
| APPENDICES..... | |
| APPENDIX A: The Legion around the world | 33 |
| APPENDIX B: Code of Honor | 34 |
| APPENDIX C: Celebrations | 35 |
| APPENDIX D: Presentation to the white kepi..... | 37 |
| APPENDIX E: Tattoos and sense of redemption in the Legion | 38 |

Preface

Somewhere between myth and reality, the French Foreign Legion has inspired many writers, filmmakers, poets, and all kinds of artists who have been trying to understand the complex – and somehow mysterious – alchemy of a unique troop made up with almost 150 different nationalities.

Today, the French Foreign Legion remains the world's unique example of a troop composed of foreigners, legally recruited during peacetime to bear the arms of France wherever the French government would want to deploy them. While the Foreign Legion is part of the French Army, its key feature is derived from a specific status related to “armed forces personnel serving as foreigners,” lastly renewed by a political decree in 2008. This decree highlights the three key characteristics of the Legion: it is a combat formation, composed of foreigners, under a French command. Even though the presence of foreigners is the only difference that distinguishes the Legion from the rest of the Army, it has a lot of implications, especially with regard to the integration process.

Concretely, the Foreign Legion today represents a strength of about 7,500 men. It is composed of the Command headquarters and eleven regiments or units forming its corps (eight in Metropolitan France, two in the Overseas departments, and one abroad). Among them, eight regiments are placed for operations under the Land Forces Command, within their combined arms brigades. The other three formations have specific purposes and are directly subordinate to the Command of the Foreign Legion (one administrative regiment, one basic and advanced training regiment, and one recruiting group).¹

But, more importantly, what makes the Legion is the legionnaire. The individual who voluntarily decides to travel to France to start a new life and the legionnaire he becomes during his first contract are almost two different persons. With the provision of a new identity, one tends to become a new person, especially when amalgamated among others with different

cultures and social backgrounds. How can the paradox between the heterogeneity and the unity of the legionnaire's population be explained? What is the secret of this extraordinary cohesion, solidarity, and dedication that has made the Foreign Legion so famous?

The comparison between the Legion and a religious order has often been made, since it works as an asylum – either punctually or for a lifetime – and somehow contributes to isolating the legionnaire from the society. According to General Rollet, probably one of the most famous officers who served within the ranks of the Foreign Legion who has been called the “Legion’s father,” this comparison echoes the exceptional feature of the Legion: “a cloister, there is no better word to define what is the Foreign Legion... A haven for hopeless, for those who cannot stand with the society of their time but whose heart is too pure to go against it... The country which created this asylum definitely served humankind.”^{1,2}

Besides the mysticism one could associate with the Foreign Legion and those who join its ranks, the challenge remains the same: to make unity from diversity. Indeed, while every legionnaire has a personal reason to join, he then has collective reasons to stay. The integration process ensures that individualities are not denied but mutually strengthened thanks to a unique esprit de corps, tied to a brotherhood that makes the legionnaires consider the Foreign Legion as a true family. Because of the extraordinary diversity of legionnaires, the Legion needs to maintain a strong collective identity that works as a framework to rally singularities around the unique purpose of serving the Legion.

This process, which I will argue oscillates between integration and assimilation, has institutional, social, emotional, and cultural drivers. Combined together, these leverages institutionally enforce the integration process, as well as facilitate an unconscious endorsement of collective identity and assimilation. Because of this double feature, not every explanation could be found in official publications, but had to be logically deduced from

¹ “Un cloître, il n’est vraiment pas de terme plus exact pour définir ce qu’est la Légion... Un refuge pour les désemparés, pour ceux qui ne peuvent pas vivre la vie du siècle, mais dont le cœur est trop droit pour chercher à en troubler l’ordre... Le pays qui a ouvert ce lieu d’Asile a bien mérité de l’humanité.”

sociological studies, mainly based on the impact of culture and collective identity in re-socialization. The result is therefore the author's personal interpretation, associated with his own experience as an officer who served many years in the ranks of the Foreign Legion.

Further, this paper does not intend to give an updated and exhaustive understanding of the Foreign Legion but to really focus on what constitutes its ability to exist and function efficiently. The writer therefore apologizes if some aspects of the Foreign Legion, whether historical, organizational, or operational, are excluded from this paper. Yet, for those looking for some more information, the bibliography provided at the end of this paper should provide some great help. Of note, most of the direct quotations in this paper are directly translated from French sources. The original French quotes appear as footnotes in addition to the references provided in the endnotes.

Above every question one should have about the Foreign Legion stands the fact that, from its creation, legionnaires' collective identity has enabled them to stand together in many wars and, for more than forty thousand, they were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice by giving their life for a country that was not theirs. While it can sound anachronistic in a contemporary society that promotes self-accomplishment, I want to explain the drivers of such a phenomenon.

“Who knows whether the unknown man who sleeps under the great Arch,

Merging his epic glory to the pride of History,

Is not this foreigner who became a son of France,

Not by the blood received but by the blood spilled”^{II,3}

^{II} “Qui sait si l'inconnu qui dort sous l'Arche immense, mêlant sa gloire épique aux orgueils du passé, n'est pas cet Etranger devenu fils de France, non par le sang reçu mais par le sang versé.”

-
- ¹ See appendix A. For more information, visit the website : <http://www.legion-etrangere.com>
- ² Jean Hallo, *Monsieur Légionnaire* (Paris: Lavauzelle, 1994), 142.
- ³ Pascal Bonetti, “Le Volontaire Etranger, ” in *Légion Notre Mère: Anthologie de la Poésie Légionnaire, 1885-2003* (Paris: Italiques, 2003), 51.

1. ABOUT THE PROCESS: BETWEEN INTEGRATION AND ASSIMILATION

The impression of an unshakable troop that the Foreign Legion gives to the neophyte and the external watcher does not necessarily reflect reality since a man does not become a legionnaire in a day. Indeed, signing a contract does not make one a new person. This is a steady process, based on a voluntary adhesion, an institutional and social integration, and a cultural assimilation enabled by a collective identity developed amongst legionnaires.

a. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

“Integration” and “assimilation” are often misused terms that actually refer to different political and sociological philosophies. Therefore, it is important to clarify these notions for the direct purpose of the follow-on study.

“Integration” is, by definition, a dynamic process based on interactions between different individuals as part of a bigger group. It involves evolution, movement, and transformation. While it etymologically refers back to the process of completing a whole, sociological sciences define it as the incorporation of new elements into a system.⁴ In this process, individuals therefore agree to become part of a group and to follow its rules without giving up their cultural background and beliefs.⁵ Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist who deeply studied this notion, underlined integration as a social phenomenon. Further, he highlighted that integration is a top-down process, meaning that individuals do not control their integration since it is the group they try to join that decides whether or not to integrate these individuals. Applied to the Foreign Legion, integration should then be understood as the fact that new legionnaires would have to adapt to the institution, by following rules, laws, and orders, without necessarily abandoning their native cultural background and beliefs. The direct purpose would be to ensure efficiency by sharing the same understanding of their new environment. Considered through the prism of an institution, integration is the prerequisite that enables the promotion of an organizational culture, as developed by Edgar Schein, since

it creates the conditions for common assumptions and shared values, as well as multiplying the power of artifacts.⁶ The mandatory use of French as the common language of the Legion will be further developed as a key for integration.

“Assimilation” goes deeper into the renouncement of individualities. It can be defined as complete adhesion to the norms of the joined group with all the expressions of sociocultural identity contained to the private sphere. While integration enables someone to live and function in a new environment, assimilation enables him to melt in it, meaning that individuals abandon their original beliefs to fully adhere to the ones of the joined group. Assimilation is a longer process that can be enforced with difficulty, since it mainly depends on the will of the subject. Applied again to the Foreign Legion, an assimilation process would mean that legionnaires voluntarily give up with their native beliefs after a period of time to entirely merge within the cultural standard of the Foreign Legion.

Between these two concepts sits the idea of “collective identity.” It can be defined as “a feeling of belonging to a social group, as a strong connection with social category, and as an important part of our mind that affects our social perceptions and behavior.”⁷ This collective identity provides a sense of protection to the members of a same group and contributes to an interpersonal enrichment. Further, this concept is also connected to the idea of “self-representation,”⁸ meaning that the members of a group positively identify themselves with an ideal-type. It can then be argued that collective identity is the step that allows moving from integration to assimilation. In the Legion, this step is crucial, since it acknowledges the primacy of the institution upon the individuals, *id est* the development of an esprit de corps.

At this step, these succinct definitions help to illustrate that the Legion, as an organization that deals with such heterogeneity with regard to its recruits, constantly navigates from insertion to assimilation. The former step starting at the very first moment when a volunteer presents himself to a recruiting station, the latter being the optimal situation of a

legionnaire fully dedicated to the Legion. Considering this process, the purpose of the Foreign Legion is at least to achieve integration, since it ensures the ability of the Foreign Legion to function as an organization, and at best to enable assimilation because it favors an unflinching commitment. However, assimilation can hardly be enforced by the Legion as an institution and, when achieved, is mainly the result of a legionnaire's personal will. That is why it is argued here that assimilation is essentially enabled by the development and sustainment of a strong collective identity, which appears to be the Gordian knot of this process and the targeted objective, since it is the best guarantee of Legion cohesiveness and resiliency, and is the paramount of what can be institutionally achieved.



This Foreign Legion collective identity did not rise automatically but was forged over time throughout a dynamic and recursive process, stimulated both by the legionnaires and by the rules set up by the Legion to facilitate the process, the first one being the Amalgam.

b. A MAJOR CORNERSTONE: THE AMALGAM IN 1835

An unprecedented decision in Foreign Legion history was made on June 20th 1835. Indeed, at this date, the Legion was sold to Spain, so that the Queen Isabel II could use it for the devolution war she was conducting against Don Carlos. Further, this period was the frame of a major decision that transformed the Legion and represented one of its main historic cornerstones: the Amalgam. From its creation, the Legion's battalions were organized along national lines, meaning that the legionnaires were regrouped by nationalities into fairly homogeneous national battalions. This organization resulted in some dangerous oppositions and rivalries between the different nationalities composing the Legion, so that it was almost impossible to create a cohesive behavior or any collective esprit de corps at the Legion level. National pride was the main driver of the legionnaires' behaviors. Therefore, the high

command realized that they would rather mix units with different nationalities to improve both the cohesion and the efficiency of this foreigners troop.⁹ The resulting mix is known as the Amalgam. Three major consequences resulted from this new organization.

The first one was that the Amalgam became a golden rule that still prevails today. To make it even more effective, the Legion decided that no nationality should represent more than 30% of the legionnaires. Experience has demonstrated that every time this ratio has been exceeded, it resulted in national tensions that affected the cohesion of the battalions, since it created a dominating – dominated relationship between legionnaires and the enforcement of the leading nationality’s culture, language, and beliefs.¹⁰

The second was the use of French as the only authorized language. Indeed, as long as the battalions were organized per nationalities, the legionnaires were using their native language. With mixed units, communication became a major concern to ensure both efficiency and cohesiveness. Even without any specific French lessons, legionnaires rapidly learned to speak French, even if it somehow was closer to a “legionnaire Esperanto;” a mix of all the different languages.

The third and last consequence was the most significant with regard to the integration of legionnaires. The human benefit of the Amalgam was to replace rivalry by emulation. Indeed, the Legion officers quickly realized that with this new organization most of the legionnaires were still motivated by the will to outstand the other nationalities, except that these different nationalities were now fighting side by side and were relying upon each other. The salient identity source became the Legion instead of their native country. As stated by George Manue in *Têtes Brûlées*:

It was actually the same men I had seen in the Middle-Atlas and in the Rif, each one willing to prove to his fellows that he had no fear, because Russian, German,

or Turkish, they were truly convinced that they had to represent their country into the fight.^{III,11}

The final result of the Amalgam, far beyond its initial purpose, has been to allow all these different nationalities to integrate within the bigger whole that is the Legion and to develop a collective identity. From this moment, the high command realized how crucial these two stages were to ensure the cohesiveness of the legion.

c. INTEGRATION AND THE PRIMACY OF COMMUNITY

*“The Legion does not change men,
It just magnifies them and reveals them to themselves”^{IV,12}*

The French Foreign Legion has generated an abundant literature, mainly created to illustrate its campaigns, exploits, and sometimes its romanticism through singular profiles. Nonetheless, the real challenge of making all these different nationalities work together has always been quite elusive, however crucial. Indeed, the French Foreign Legion remains a human catalyzer of worldwide tensions, crises, and miseries. Those who decide to join often look for a better life while they also try to escape their past. Thus, the Foreign Legion naturally reproduces all the troubles that occur in the world during a specific period. How does the Legion make sure that it can create from this heterogeneity a common fate and a common will to fight, with legionnaires ready to die for a country that is not theirs? It steadfastly insists on one golden rule: the primacy of community over individuals.

However, the process is much more involved than simply enforcing a rule. On the surface, everything seems to oppose homogeneity in the Legion: nationalities, ages, social and professional backgrounds, etc. As described in a famous officer song, “there are some lawyers, some doctors, some judges, nobles and cops, even some priests who easily swear all

^{III} “C’était bien les mêmes hommes que j’avais vu dans le Moyen-atlas et dans le Rif, chacun d’eux éprouvant le besoin de montrer à son camarade de rang qu’il n’avait pas peur et cela parce que Russe, Allemand ou Turc, obscurément il se sentait investi de la charge de représenter son pays au feu.”

^{IV} “La Légion ne transforme pas les hommes. Elle les révèle à eux-mêmes.”

day long, in the Legion!”^{V,13} Yet, instead of being a burden, this variety is actually a benefit. That is why the purpose of integration is not to deny individualities, which would generate a sense of frustration and be counter-productive, but to tie them into the consciousness of a now common fate and the sense of community. Further, this diversity has always been a strength that the Legion would madly ignore. As stated by the Colonel Carbuccia: “I could have built an entire city. I had in my regiment some architects, engineers, artists. When I was looking for a savant, a writer or a painter, I was formulating my request to my Command Sergeant Major and the next morning I had ten names instead of one...”^{VI14} Drawn from a time when the Legion was spending as much time building cities in Algeria as fighting rebels, this feature is still a great advantage since it enables the Legion to take benefit from a huge set of skills and cultural awareness, whatever the mission and wherever it deploys.

Therefore, integration has become from the Amalgam an institutional purpose, aimed at preserving diversity within unity. The sense of community and social belonging is crucial for the institution. By joining the Legion and moving away from their socializing environment, the recruits join a new community and thus accept not only to become combatants but also to integrate what will naturally become their substitute family, as stated in the second article of the Foreign Legion honor code: “Each legionnaire is your brother in arms, whatever his nationality, race or religion. You always show him the close solidarity which unites the members of a family.”¹⁵

^V “Il y a des avocats, des médecins, des juges, des marquis, des roussins, d’anciens notaires. Même des curés qui sans façon baptisent le Bon-Dieu de sacrés noms, ô légionnaire !”

^{VI} “J’aurais pu construire une ville. J’avais dans mon régiment des architectes, des ingénieurs, des artistes. Quand j’avais besoin d’un savant, d’un écrivain ou d’un peintre, je le demandais par la voie de l’ordre et le lendemain matin, les sergents-majors m’apportaient dix noms au lieu d’un.”

d. BEYOND SOCIAL INTEGRATION, A CULTURAL ASSIMILATION

*“Two pieces of wood in as a cross, a name,
It is not important if the name is good,
That is a Legionnaire”^{VII.16}*

Beyond the institutional focus on integration, time and culture affect this process and enable it to move closer to assimilation. Indeed, this process is part of a re-socialization. While all the sociological studies agree on the inherent nature of socialization for any individual living among a group, some key features can help to understand specific aspects that apply to legionnaires and how it is possible to go from integration to assimilation. Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist who specialized in the study of the socialization process, developed the concept of *habitus* in line with the Freudian concept of *super-ego* or with Emile Durkheim’s representation of *social facts*. According to this theory, habitus is a “system of durable, transposable dispositions and principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.”¹⁷ Applied to the Legion, it means that, over time, legionnaires will more and more tend to think and act in accordance with the group mindset, as their legionnaire status becomes their salient identity. Differently from institutional enforcement, individualities are gradually smoothed as individuals naturally conform to an ideal-type, a mental representation of how a legionnaire should be and act.

Another key feature is that socialization generally refers to different groups that each have a specific identity: family, friends, work, leisure, hobbies, etc. What makes the Foreign Legion unique is that all these aspects are either excluded from or inherent in the daily life of the legionnaire. Indeed, the Legion, as a socializing institution, concentrates all these key aspects to make one identity. Because it is a time-based process, most of the legionnaires

^{VII} “Deux morceaux de bois en croix, un nom, qu’importe si ce nom là n’est pas le bon, c’est un légionnaire.”

develop after a certain period of time, usually five years, a sense of “we-ness” as a result of this holistic social relationship. This is symptomatic of assimilation. This five year development process is obviously neither automatic nor clearly delineated but usually corresponds to the end of the legionnaire’s first contract and the moment when he needs to ask himself whether he should quit or continue. It is also a timeframe that generally ensures a significant amount of shared experience, whether in France or in deployment.

As stated by Karina Korostelina, “this feeling of identity cements a group as a social aggregate and leads to common forms of thinking and behaviors.”¹⁸ One legionnaire’s will to break with his past, and therefore to operate a deep cut with his roots, can even more reinforce this process. This “new start,” as sometimes portrayed, can strengthen this socialization process by allowing the development of an almost new identity. Indeed, the new recruit consciously and unconsciously transforms his identity by mirroring the others and by becoming a member of his new brotherhood. As analyzed by Henri Tajfel in the 1970s, one’s group identity largely conditions individual fates. The more structured the group, the more pressure it puts on individuals to comply with the collective identity since the sociocultural norm is more clearly defined and controlled. Applied to a group such as the Foreign Legion, it can lead to a phenomenon of depersonalization, which means that individuals do not define themselves by personal features but by their social belonging. This sense of social belonging often transcends previous identities, even those as significant as religion or family. As an example, a Muslim legionnaire once being asked whether he would agree to fight against a Muslim country once replied to me: “I am not a Muslim, I’m a legionnaire.” Another asked me one time to give him a picture of my wife and I, so that he could tattoo it on his chest, arguing I was his family.

Finally, this transformation of individuals through a deep adhesion to a group is reinforced by the fact that, by positively identifying oneself to a group, one tends to reject or

undermine other groups. This is the cornerstone that leads to assimilation. Indeed, by pushing the socialization process to such a holistic system, legionnaires not only develop a collective identity through the perception of similarities within their “ingroup,” but also in contrast with the differences of other groups or categories.¹⁹

e. ABOUT THE LEVEL OF ASSIMILATION

*“Legionnaire, you are a volunteer
Serving France with honor and fidelity”²⁰*

The fact that the Legion is a troop made up of so many different nationalities is not the only feature that makes it unique. It is also the fact that these men, coming from all over the world, all for different reasons, do not have at the beginning anything in common but joining the Legion. Fighting for a country that is not theirs even makes the idea of homeland irrelevant to legionnaires, while it is usually the main motivation of military troops.

The level of assimilation to France of these legionnaires can therefore be argued. While they undoubtedly bear the arms of France and fight on its behalf, one will hardly hear a legionnaire ever singing the national anthem. What they sing instead is “le boudin,” the traditional anthem in the Foreign Legion. Even though legionnaires are ready to get rid of their past, it appears that they always remain proud of their native heritage and acknowledge that what make them unique is the fact that they are foreigners. For instance, only a few ask for French citizenship at the end of their contract. Therefore, while they agree to be loyal to France by signing their contract, the sense of community hardly goes beyond the Foreign Legion itself. As stated by Geoffrey Bocca in his book *La Légion!*,

They had not died for France, that was clear. Most of them had never been to France. The fact, the astonishing fact, was that they had died for the regiment itself, and by doing so had made a strange metamorphosis which was to haunt the Legion to the rest of its days. They had become French “not by birth” as the Legion began to say, “but by the blood they shed.”²¹

As stated, most of the legionnaires had never been to France before the Legion was first stationed in Corsica in 1962. France was therefore a diluted idea in the legionnaire

mindset. They were thankful for France to offer them a new life but the Legion was their daily homeland. However, a deep sense of recognition remains obvious by noticing the consideration France bears to its legionnaires. For instance, since 1999, every legionnaire wounded in operation can systematically claim the French citizenship according this principle of the “blood shed for France.” In case he would die, the same law applies for all his minor children.

Therefore, the relationship between France and its legionnaires needs to be considered through a double prism. Serving France with honor and fidelity, thankful for harboring them, legionnaires firstly construct their collective identity by identifying themselves to the Legion, as an exclusive system. On the other side of the scope, the Foreign Legion, as a regular French military force, integrates its recruits with a two-step priority: the Legion, then France. But, as discussed, while collective identity is the crucial step that allows legionnaires to go from integration to assimilation within the Legion, it will hardly go beyond integration in regards to France. This can be explained by how one legionnaire answers the question “do you serve France or the Legion?” He states, “I serve the Legion, which serves France.”²²

f. DESERTION: INTEGRATION FAILURE?

Integration is not an exact science, nor an immediate process. It has principles but no law, so that the same process can have different results depending on the legionnaires. During the initial period of training problems may arise. One such problem is desertion. Indeed, although people join for individual reasons, it is often the result of a spontaneous decision. This can then make their choice difficult to sustain when they are confronted with the basic instruction and the roughness of their new life during the first few months. Legionnaires are thus naturally affected by melancholy, which is known as the legionnaire’s disease, the *cafard*. Therefore, integration works as a way to keep them focused on the present time instead of hung up with their past. Similarly, everything is made to prevent idleness and to

give them short term objectives as well as a tense daily routine so that they do not have time to be down in the dumps. Typical military disciplinary processes that prevent desertion are not applicable in the Legion. Without any social tie in France outside the Legion, the young legionnaire does not really care about the judicial consequences of a desertion, so he is not afraid of any repressive system. That is why the main solution to address desertion is to tie the legionnaires closely each other and to keep them highly focused on training and operational deployments.

When idleness gets too high and cannot be prevented, a legionnaire is inclined to desert. This can be for different reasons but still potentially represents a failure since it is proof that the sense of community was not fully developed. That is why desertions mainly happen during the first six months of a legionnaire's contract, at a time when integration is still an on-going and immature process. The Legion does not pretend to avoid all desertion, since it is fully aware that not every recruit can succeed and adapt to this completely different environment. However, desertion remains a matter of importance because it helps to question the integration process and to check, case by case, whether something went wrong through this process or if the legionnaire's decision to desert is independent from any Legion actions or processes. For instance, every time a legionnaire deserts, every leader – from his team leader to his company commander – needs to fill in a form to determine whether he was well integrated or not. This information includes friends, hobby, frequency of mails received from his country, etc.

2. ABOUT THE LEVERAGES: A TAUGHT AND INHERITED PROCESS

a. A NEW START

The Foreign Legion offers its recruits the opportunity of a new start, which can have different results with regard to the re-socialization process, depending on the legionnaire's expectations towards the Legion. Arguably, the more one legionnaire is willing to break with

his past, his sociocultural framework, and his family environment, the more he is going to transfer onto the Legion his desire of a new life, carrying his ideals and willing to correct his deceptions. Between the legionnaire who consciously joins for a limited period of time and the one who resolutely buys a one-way ticket to the Legion, the re-socialization process will have different results. Both will first go through the integration stage, but only one will steadily be assimilated because of the exclusiveness of the Legion as a sociocultural system. Such legionnaires then consider the Legion as their one and only family.

Considered as a powerful tool for integration, as well as a necessary condition or assimilation, this “new start” is institutionally enforced. By joining the Legion, the new recruit “bypasses the barriers of a society where he was paining to find his place,”²³ and steps into a new world that marginalizes his beliefs and mainly considers his will to serve and to start anew. To do so, the particularity of the Foreign Legion is that it affords the recruit an opportunity to get a new identity: Thomas Riou will become Thibault Romeo, with the provision of a military ID as the only certificate of this new identity. This key institutional aspect can help a legionnaire to break with his past and kick off his new life almost as a brand new person. It provides a “second chance” to those who want to turn a page in their life and who need or want to make a new start. Joining the Legion, every legionnaire merges into a protective, anonymous, and undifferentiated community.²⁴

However, this process requests some cautions. The possibility the Legion offers to those who apply to obtain a new identity requires vigilance. First, the Legion is not designed to harbor any criminal so it has to carefully check the legionnaire’s past, in close coordination with national and international security organizations. Second, the Legion only selects recruits who are considered as able and willing to adapt to the rules of community life. These two cautions are both a moral barrier and the insurance that no asocial individual will threaten the integration process.

As a result, this new start is the genesis of integration, and further of assimilation. In effect, the Legion works as a real asylum that allows any legionnaire to become someone else. The break with the past, coupled with a strictly disciplined life, ensures that the legionnaire will be entirely dedicated to his new life. The relationship he creates from then on with the Legion and his fellows ties him to his new identity.

b. TRAINING AND SHAPING

According to the Command headquarters directives, the objective of the basic training is double: formation and education.²⁵ While formation intends to develop skills and refers to tactical efficiency, education is more complex. Indeed, education in the Legion not only means to morally prepare the recruit for deployment in operation but also, and mainly, to ensure integration of the young legionnaire with his peers and the overall institution. That is why, as stated by a former Commanding general, some of the end states of the basic training are to “facilitate the quick integration of the new legionnaire within his unit [and] to constitute the cement of a resilient cohesion, vanguard of the strength and efficiency of the Foreign Legion as an operational tool.”²⁶

To ease this integration, the Legion centralizes the entire basic instruction within one unit: the 4th Régiment Etranger, exclusive formation and training regiment for the entire Foreign Legion. This regiment, called the melting-pot of the Legion, is the key step of the equalizing and re-socializing process. It has the educative mission of making sure that the legionnaire finishes his training having personally endorsed the values of the Legion, as depicted by the code of honor (see appendix B). Again, it is crucial according to the Commanding general to insist on “the pride of being a legionnaire and to be part of a cohesive and highly operational unit [...] the cult of effort that has to be developed in every circumstances [...] the sense of solidarity, to inculcate and to expand by all means, especially during combat training.”²⁷ Concretely, this integration of the legionnaire throughout his basic

training will be achieved through three main pillars, as described in the institutional directive for initial training: learning French as a way to facilitate the recreation of a socio-affective intercultural relationship between legionnaires, tactical and physical training based on collective effort to strengthen a collective identity, and education to deepen the sense of belonging to a spiritual community.²⁸

First, because of the obvious foreign nature of the legionnaires, the main concern during the initial training is to learn French. Indeed, as developed earlier, French is the only authorized language within the Legion. The reason is undoubtedly the operational efficiency and the fact that any legionnaire who cannot speak French at the end of the basic training risks becoming marginalized from the rest of the group. Sociological studies have proven that a common language is one of the key requirements for a group to move towards a collective identity. For instance, Philippe Chasseriaud demonstrated in a psychological survey completed in 2003 that the more the legionnaires were able to understand and speak French, the more they were inclined to move away from their cultural background to adhere to the Legion as a new socio-affective reference frame.²⁹

Second, before it is deployed to overseas operations and strengthened by shared traumas and glories, the cohesiveness of the Legion needs to be forged during instruction. Indeed, beyond integration, cohesiveness is the guarantee of the collective identity that the Legion wants to institutionally enable. To start developing it from the day they join, all the recruits do every activity as a group so that they perceive solidarity and interdependence as vital to succeed with very demanding training in rough conditions. Steadily, the individual disappears behind the group; the individual identity behind a collective identity. The strict discipline, which rules the entire training, limits selfishness and individualism. This collective valor, which is not argued to be specific to the Legion but to most elite troops, refers back to

the idea that most of the legionnaire's actions are not primarily tied to patriotism or individual instinct but to a sense of belonging to a group that is more important than the individual.³⁰

Lastly, the educational aspect of the training helps the legionnaires to create unshakable ties as members of a new brotherhood. The Foreign Legion teaches traditions and history in a way that the new recruit measures the burden and the legacy of his predecessors, as depicted by the Legion motto "More Majorum."^{VIII} Focused on the emotional scope of the sense of identity, these values taught during the training process work as a booster for integration, helping the individual to positively identify to the group. As stated by Olivier Rochereau in his analysis of the Legion in 2000, "the sacred feature of the mission, the veneration of elders and heroes, rigour in the job as well as in the behavior, unswerving fidelity to brothers in arm, are the unshakable bases of the Legion."^{IX31}

As a result, the initial training period is crucial to shape the new legionnaire and functions as a trinity: it is acculturating by enforcing the use of French as a unique language, interculturating by merging different nationalities altogether, and enculturating by developing a new sense of identity.³²

c. NORMING: DAILY LIFE, DISCIPLINE, AND HIERARCHY

*"They stand altogether,
They stand against the outside world"*^{X,33}

The anonymity provided by a new name directly contributes to the development of the collective identity and the sense of community. However, three aspects reinforce this "we-ness" and are used as institutional leverages: the austerity of the daily life, discipline, and the sense of hierarchy.

Concerning the daily life, many caveats come with the benefit of a new identity and the Legion's asylum role. Indeed, legionnaires serving under false identity have limited

^{VIII} "Like the elders did"

^{IX} "Le caractère sacré de la mission, le culte des anciens et des héros, la rigueur dans la forme et dans le fond, la fidélité indéfectible au compagnon d'armes, font les fondements essentiels de la Légion."

^X "Ils sont solidaires les uns vis-à-vis des autres, ils sont solidaires vis-à-vis du monde extérieur."

citizen rights. These restrictions help both to protect a legionnaire from compromising his real identity and to ensure that he does not improperly use this false identity. For instance, legionnaires serving under a false identity cannot subscribe to any contract (phone, bank, etc), nor can they buy a car. Further, every legionnaire during his first contract of five years must live within the barracks, cannot get married, and needs to wear his uniform every time he goes off base. These rules, which can appear quite strict, do not serve any purpose other than integration. Indeed, they force the new legionnaires to be entirely dedicated to the Legion and to their peers, spending their time all together and cutting the bridges that would make them dependent on the outside world.

The discipline then, strict but never brutal or unfair, contributes to the development of the brotherhood since it ties all the legionnaires to the same rules and constraints. As related by a legionnaire himself, Antoine Sylvère, in his book *Le Légionnaire Flutsch*, “this justice of discipline did not tolerate any favoritism. Here [in the Legion] the definition of individual liberty was a true reality. Everyone was participating to common tasks and drudgeries and there was no privileged.”^{XI34} Further, discipline not only helps to enforce rules but also contributes to teach rigor and exemplarity. Indeed, these two principles that apply to the young legionnaires as well as to the officers contribute to bring discipline to the level of a shared value that helps to develop positive identification. This discipline helps the legionnaire to remain focused and not to lean back on what he tried to escape when he joined the Legion. As stated by a legionnaire: “a man joins the Legion to forget. The object of Legion discipline is to give him no chance to remember. That is why we [Legion’s non-commissioned officers] are so tough.”³⁵ Everything is scheduled, organized, and controlled. Finally, being endorsed as a value by the legionnaires themselves, discipline is almost self-regulating. Legionnaires who fail to be exemplary or try to bypass the rules tend to be excluded from the group and warned

^{XI} “Cette justice de la discipline n’admettait pas le favoritisme. Ici la définition de la liberté individuelle correspondait à une exacte réalité. Chacun apportait sa contribution aux tâches communes et il n’y avait pas de privilégiés.”

by their peers. Thus, discipline becomes related to a sense of honor that makes the legionnaire voluntarily comply with the constraints instead of resisting them. Indeed, cohesiveness and collective identity stand in the subtle balance between individual freedom and sense of community.³⁶

Lastly, it can be argued that the sense of hierarchy is paroxysmal in the French Foreign Legion. The fact that the legionnaires mostly break with their former ties, either patriotic or familial, pushes them to recreate some new relationships and allegiances. It can even lead some legionnaires to relate their officer to a redeemer. While commanding legionnaires requires complete dedication from the officers, which can sometimes dissuade some of them from joining the Legion, legionnaires pay it back with a true sense of confidence and affection for the one who is seen as the concrete actor of their salvation. Many books emphasize this unique relationship between legionnaires and officers. Here is the testimony of the legionnaire Silbermann written at the end of the nineteenth century:

What you will find here [in the Legion] are strict leaders but a strictness full of benevolence, and from that comes the extreme devotion of legionnaires for their officers. All are thankful for the constant care they bear for them in every circumstance. For a legionnaire, his leader is God. Do not have any wrong word about God with a priest, nor to a legionnaire about his officer.^{XII,37}

Even today, these notions of discipline, comradeship, and loyalty towards leaders are crystalized in the code of honor that the legionnaires will learn and apply from their basic training up to the end of their contract, if not further: “Respectful of traditions, faithful to your leaders, discipline and camaraderie are your strength; courage and loyalty your virtues.”³⁸

d. SOCIAL PRESSURE AND SOCIALIZATION OVER TIME

Socialization is a dynamic, life-long process that relies on social identity and cultural “indoctrination.” Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, believes that socialization is both

^{XII} “Tu trouveras ici des chefs sévères mais d’une sévérité pleine de bienveillance, et de là vient le grand dévouement de ceux-ci pour leurs officiers. Tous leur sont reconnaissants des égards qu’ils ont pour eux en toutes circonstances. Pour un légionnaire, son chef c’est son Dieu. Ne dis pas à un curé du mal de Dieu, ni à un légionnaire du mal de son chef.”

“constructivist” and “structuralist,” meaning that while one cannot deny any individual his own temperament and ability to think and act, individuals are a social construct and are structured by society. In comparison to the notion of “habitus,” he defines the “illusio” as the fact that an individual thinks according to his social environment.³⁹ To explain how social groups model personal judgment and actions, he stresses that socialization corresponds to an accumulation of capitals – economic, social, cultural, and symbolic – over time.⁴⁰ Applied to the specific case of the Legion, the more time a legionnaire spends in the Legion, the more his way of thinking and behaving will be unconsciously influenced by it. Moreover, what reinforces the sense of community and favors assimilation in the Legion is that almost the entire capital is accumulated within the same social group. While outside the Legion people usually belong to different social groups (school, work, leisure, family, etc.), almost the entire professional, social, cultural, and symbolic aspects of a legionnaire’s life are concentrated within a single social group: the Legion.

This sociological perspective helps to understand the level of assimilation which depends on whether a legionnaire voluntarily joins the Legion for a short period of time or really seeks a new start, if not a new life. While the former often looks after a professional experience or can simply be moved by curiosity but with no reason to escape his past, the latter deeply ties his life to the Legion with no will to turn back to his previous life. This fundamental difference affects assimilation in the sense that this process is not enforced but the result of a voluntary and exclusive identification to a group. Therefore, the tighter a legionnaire will be willing to tie his life to the Legion, the more assimilated he will be over time.

In addition to this social assimilation process, David Romer, an American economist and teacher at Berkeley University, talks about “social pressure” as a conscious constraint on actions, in contrast to Bourdieu’s focus on the unconsciousness of socialization. What Romer

argues is that an individual can hardly act differently than the group he identifies with, since his positive identification depends on his compliance with the collective mindset and actions of that group. Moreover, this tendency is even higher in a community that shares the same culture and educational process, which is precisely the case in the Legion. By norming the key aspects of a legionnaire's life, the Legion exerts a social pressure that steadily favors assimilation.

e. THE KEPI BLANC AND THE IMPORTANCE OF RITES

“One is not born a man, he becomes a man.”⁴¹

On July 14th 1939, during the French Bastille Day military parade, legionnaires proudly marched for the first time in Paris with their white kepi, a distinctive headgear. From this moment, it became the distinctive mark of this exceptional troop.⁴² This white kepi, famous all over the world, has its own history. At the beginning of the twentieth century, French troops campaigning in Africa used to put a cover over the kepi to protect it, as well as their neck, from dust and sun. Originally khaki, it became white because of the sun and the repeated washings. The elder the legionnaire was, the whiter was his kepi cover. It became a proof of experience.

This white kepi became such a symbol that its delivery to the young recruits, who actually become legionnaires from the exact moment they first wear it, can be compared to a passage rite. They only receive it at the end of the four-month basic training, during a solemn ceremony, which by many aspects mirrors a dubbing rite and represents the first transformation step from a recruit into a new person. This ceremony systematically occurs after a forty-mile raid whose purpose is to test for a last time the recruits' will and can represent a redemptory track that helps them to expiate their past. From an institutional perspective, this ceremony created in 1968 officially serves three objectives: “feeling welcome in a new family, the Foreign Legion, highlighting recruits' will by letting them put

on the white kepi themselves, and having them resay their oath of serving France with honor and fidelity by reciting the code of honor aloud altogether.”^{XIII,43} According to Elisabeth Ferrand, these objectives thus explicitly make this ceremony a passage and initiatory rite, a rebirth as a legionnaire, and a crucial step to create a collective identity.⁴⁴

Further, this white kepi becomes the paramount of the legionnaire’s uniform and immediately reflects his identity. Being distinguishable from another group strengthens the Legion’s collective identity. As stated by Pierre Mac Orlan, the “uniform reflects who they are. From the time a legionnaire will look like any infantry soldier, legionnaires will not exist anymore.”^{XIV,45} How legionnaires perceive themselves is then a strong structural factor to promote their identity. This is explicitly reflected in the honor code: “proud to be a legionnaire, you display it in your impeccable uniforms, your always worthy, but modest behavior and your always neat living quarters.”⁴⁶ This statement illustrates that becoming a legionnaire is more than signing a contract. It involves a deep social and cultural restructuration that can be ideally expressed by a legionnaire himself.

f. A LEGIONNAIRE TESTIMONY ABOUT THE LEGION

Right before Christmas 2014, a story of a US Army officer who had deserted his unit to join the Foreign Legion hit the news.⁴⁷ After five years spent in the Legion, he finally decided to turn himself into the American justice system to face the consequences of his actions. I had the privilege to be his company commander from 2009 to 2011. With his authorization, I want to reproduce here a part of the personal statement he made during the trial since it provides wonderful insights on what the Legion tries to achieve with regard to the structuration of a collective identity. According to his own words, “this is not merely a story

^{XIII} “leur donner le sentiment d’être accueillis au sein de leur nouvelle patrie, la Légion Etrangère; de marquer leur volontariat en les faisant se coiffer eux-mêmes de leur kepi; de leur faire renouveler la promesse de servir la France avec Honneur et Fidélité en récitant ensemble le code d’honneur.”

^{XIV} “L’uniforme reflète ce qu’ils sont. Le jour où un légionnaire ressemblera à s’y méprendre à un soldat d’infanterie, il n’y aura plus de légionnaires.”

about unauthorized absence nor of the French Foreign Legion. This is my [his] testimony about survival and redemption.”⁴⁸

Although I had left for the Legion in 2009 seeking intense physical hardships, my mental health also improved due to the Legion's strict and regimented lifestyle. According to the Legionnaire' Code of Honor, a Legionnaire's strength is discipline and camaraderie. This discipline and camaraderie kept me not only physically strong but also rendered me very mentally tough. Therefore, although I was still secretly depressed in the Legion, I never allowed myself to entertain suicidal fantasies. I could not let my comrades down. We Legionnaires were extremely close knit and always looked out for one another. If somebody seemed to be having a bad day, we volunteered to take their guard shift, to help clean their weapon, to do their laundry, to do whatever it took to keep our comrades strong of body, mind, and spirit. We policed each other. Extremely disciplined, we always took pride in our personal appearance, our barracks, weapon, equipment, and vehicle maintenance, and especially in our physical fitness. We considered mediocrity, laziness, and especially a lack of discipline to be attributes unbecoming a Legionnaire. I also never had time to brood or feel sorry for myself. For the last five years, I was rarely alone but instead was almost always with fellow Legionnaires. Even if I was reading books in my barracks, there were at least three or four others next to me in the same room. There was always somebody who wanted to go for a run, work out at the gym, help me iron my uniform, lend me some kit or gear, or share a hot coffee or a cold brew. We shared good times and hard times, embracing them both. However, we never spoke of emotions. That wasn't our way, as we considered weakness-physical, mental, and/or emotional - to likewise be traits unbecoming a Legionnaire. We expressed pain and heartache in a different manner. At least three times a day, we marched singing melancholic odes to our beloved homelands, families, and lovers. We also sang of sacrifice and of bravery. By marching and singing in step, each and every Legionnaire was allowed to vent in the anonymity of a squad, platoon, or company in formation. It was as if the unit's collective sorrow replaced the Legionnaire's personal sorrow. Did I miss home? Did I miss my family? Did I miss my friends? Did I miss my country? Of course I did, immensely in fact, and I sang about it daily with my comrades who shared the same pain yet never voiced it in person. We were more than a military unit or fraternity of men; we were a family. The Legion saved my life because its Legionnaires shouldered me along the way. I was weak and broken, and they made me strong because we were strong together. During the last five years I found my will to live. I lived with them, I lived for them, and above all I lived for the day that I would be honorably discharged from the Legion and finally be able to surrender to US military control. And at my goodbye dinner, I told my fellow Legionnaires that I was a West Point graduate and a US Army Officer.⁴⁹

3. COLLECTIVE IDENTITY: SHARED VALUES AND ARTIFACTS

a. THE LEGION IS OUR COUNTRY

“In the pride of their status, in the esteem of their leaders, in the ties of brotherhood, legionnaires have found reasons that justify an endless courage and devotion.”⁵⁰

Just like the kepi provides the legionnaire with an individual symbol of identity and personal significance, there are tokens, symbols, and historical events that define and reinforce the Legion’s identity. Defined by Edgar Schein as artifacts, they are “attributes that can be seen, felt and heard by the uninitiated observer.”⁵¹ These are tangible aspects that relay the cultural meaning of a collective identity. While artifacts serve a unifying purpose, they also help to differentiate one group from another. Therefore, the Foreign Legion tends to develop its own artifacts that strengthen the legionnaires’ collective identity by sustaining meaningful differences with the rest of the French Army.

On every French military unit flag appears the inscription “Honor and Fatherland,” except in the Legion where instead is displayed the motto “Honor and Fidelity.” This fidelity a legionnaire has for his fellows, his leaders, and the institution nourishes the Foreign Legion esprit de corps and a sense of exclusive belonging. Deeply tied to values such as honor and commitment, it can then turn into another form of patriotism. This is why the motto *Legio Patria Nostra*, the Legion is our country, makes sense. As well as the notion of homeland, this motto implies a common will, but is here closely related to the Foreign Legion traditions and collective identity.

Colonel Rollet first initiated the display of this motto on the Foreign Legion’s flags at the end of the First World War. The purpose was clearly to state that “fidelity acts as a fatherland for these stateless legionnaires who joined the ranks of the Legion to find a haven to their miseries, to give a chance to their fate, to give some adventures to their dreams.”^{XV,52}

^{XV} “La fidélité militaire tient lieu de patrie aux durs ‘heimatlos’ venus chercher dans les rangs de la légion, un havre à leurs misères et donner une activité à leur fougue, du pain à leur faim, des aventures à leurs rêves.”

By substituting the word “Fidelity” for “Fatherland,” it appears that this fidelity goes to the Legion and its officers, which only indirectly personify France. Further, a legionnaire who eventually gets French citizenship is only then officially told that he “now has to obey French laws.” This declaration proves that before naturalization the legionnaire’s unique references are the orders he receives from his officers, and that before becoming French his citizenship is the one of a legionnaire.⁵³

The motto *Legio Patria Nostra* finally illustrates that the Foreign Legion represents an exclusive system, if not a real country, that influences its members’ identities. From Pierre Mac Orlan’s words, “men who join the Legion are not always exceptional. Only traditions, esprit de corps, and regimental pride make these soldiers some stateless conquerors who only obey the motto displayed on their flags: Honor and Fidelity.”^{XVI,54}

b. THE ROLE OF CELEBRATIONS IN THE LEGION

Explicit rules and artifacts contribute to forge a collective identity. The purpose of celebrations in the Foreign Legion is to sustain this identity. Christmas, as one of those celebrations, naturally intends to develop the sense of family within the Legion and is a good opportunity for every legionnaire to remember that one day his fellows welcomed him as a newborn. In most societies, family is usually the main integration cell and refers to blood as well as legal ties. By celebrating Christmas altogether, legionnaires promote their unity as an indivisible cell. That is why every year, starting in early December, the mood changes and all legionnaires focus on this merry upcoming event. Secretly, every platoon, every company, and every service does its best and uses all its skills to build and expose a giant crib that displays the unit’s cohesiveness and tells about key aspects of the legionnaires’ lives (see appendix C1). Christmas Eve is a pure moment of familial joy that commissioned and non-

^{XVI} “Il faut bien le répéter, les hommes qui viennent à la Légion ne sont pas toujours d’une essence exceptionnelle. Ce sont les traditions, l’esprit de corps, l’orgueil particulièrement sensible du régiment qui font de ces soldats des conquérants sans patrie qui n’obéissent qu’à la devise brodée sur leurs drapeaux : Honneur et Fidélité.”

commissioned officers enjoy with their legionnaires instead of their personal family. For instance, I remember all the Christmases spent in my unit as an officer. Every December 24, if not deployed, I was wishing my wife and kids a merry Christmas before leaving my home to join my legionnaires in the barracks. I well remember my children incredulously staring at me, as well as the sadness of my wife, but the Legion was truly my main family at this time. This celebration is definitely a powerful way to share intimacy and to develop even more ties between a legionnaire and his leaders.⁵⁵

While Christmas celebrates the family, the commemoration of Cameron highlights the soldiering virtues of the Foreign Legion and every April 30 represents its biggest annual celebration. During this battle that occurred during the Mexican campaign in 1863, sixty-two men under the command of Captain Danjou made an oath to fulfill the mission at all cost while they opposed more than two-thousand Mexican soldiers. Only five survived, yet the mission was a success. Beyond facts, this battle became over time the symbol of courage, dedication, and fidelity to the given word. More than a celebration, Cameron is the annual opportunity for every legionnaire to renew his oath of fidelity to his fellows and leaders. It is part of the overall educational process that contributes to the permanent strengthening of legionnaires' cohesiveness and collective identity.⁵⁶ Further, in the Command headquarters, this celebration is the occasion to exhibit the wooden hand of Captain Danjou as a sacred relic that legionnaires venerate as a tangible proof of their dedication (see appendix C2).

These two examples highlight how the Legion uses celebrations to enforce the collective identity narrative. These shared beliefs, once understood and voluntarily adopted, punctuate a legionnaire's life and contribute to reinforce the Foreign Legion collective identity and the legionnaire's positive identification to it. As members of the same corps, legionnaires cannot be separated from the Legion. Thus begins the esprit de corps as defined by its genitor, Colonel Ardant du Picq.⁵⁷

c. PHYSICAL IDENTIFICATION: TATTOOS IN THE LEGION

*“We, the damned from the entire world”*⁵⁸

Tattoos are physical marks of belonging that contribute to permanently emphasize the sense of collective identity. Jean-Eric Lundy, a French psychiatrist who studied the links between tattoos and the Legion’s collective identity, noticed that legionnaires usually get tattooed at the end of the basic training, a period characterized by promiscuity, rusticity, and an intense collective identification to a new status.⁵⁹ Young legionnaires are then inclined to explicitly display their belonging as a form of allegiance.⁶⁰ These tattoos symbolize a life-long engagement so important that it is worth permanently marking one’s flesh to make sure it will never be forgotten. Psychologically, tattoos signify life-long acceptance that one will have of a decision made at a single moment in time. Andrew Lang, a Scottish mythologist, highlighted in a study in 1905 that tattoos first appeared in primitive tribal societies as a way to prevent incest, *id est* to identify members of a same family.⁶¹ Thus, the psychological process that leads a legionnaire to get tattooed reflects identification to a new familial lineage.⁶² With this new skin, the legionnaire realizes a symbolic identification to the Legion as an overarching structuring group.⁶³

While tattoos are not exclusive to the Foreign Legion or the military, it is interesting to note that most of the legionnaires’ tattoos refer to a redemptory process or a painful life. *March or die; Suffer and shut up; Come on, death;* etc. (See examples of the usual kinds of maxims that are displayed on legionnaires’ skins in Appendix E). As a result, these tattoos reinforce the mental perception that they all share the same burden through this redemption process, without any remission other than death.

They tattooed their faces with death’s heads, snakes, beetles and other hideous designs, maiming themselves to prevent any hope of return to civilization. There were cases of men tattooing the word “Merde” [crap] on the palms of their hands, automatically insulting any officer they saluted, and deliberately condemning themselves to a lifetime of suffering in the penal battalions. In this “monastery of the damned” they placed themselves in the same class as those eccentric early

saints of the Church who achieved the odor of sanctity by forswearing to wash themselves for a lifetime, or by never changing their linen.⁶⁴

d. ROMANTICISM IN THE LEGION

Beyond every rational explanation, the integration process in the Foreign Legion still partially relies on mysticism and romanticism. Indeed, an idealized and almost chimeric vision of the Legion influences the legionnaires' collective identification. Myth and legend have an important role to play in the creation of the legionnaires' collective identity by providing ideals and strengthening positive identification to the Legion. While the way the cinema and popular fiction depict the Legion is somehow far away from reality, it still provides a romantic and heroic image to which the legionnaires tend to adhere. Every legionnaire is a participant in the collective myth, which in return favors a positive identification. "The legionnaires are mythomaniacs, inventors of fables which they are the first to believe in,"⁶⁵ wrote Georges Manue, a former legionnaire. Adrian Liddell Hart, son of the famous military writer and former legionnaire, even acknowledged that the Legion had "inspired a legend, a moral climate affecting those who are not refugees in the legal sense."⁶⁶ Further, he developed that "it [the Legion] exists in the situation of the moment; it responds to a challenge. It is influenced more by what people think it is than what it has been... Its survival is due at least as much to its human mystique as to any military genius."⁶⁷

Artifacts as songs, poetry, and celebrations permanently reinforce this romance. For instance, singing is really popular in the Legion. Every unit has a song that is supposed to depict its cohesiveness and valor. Most of the time, when deployed on the field, legionnaires gather around a fire after the sunset and sing as a way to expiate their sins and to renew their oath to the Legion. As a result, it unconsciously conditions the legionnaires' mindsets and makes them primary apostles of the values and beliefs the Legion advocates to ensure integration, cohesiveness, and collective identity.

CONCLUSION

This study about the Foreign Legion ultimately helps to explore the complex process that makes this troop what it is today. However, this is also a study of the hearts of men and how they build a collective identity while sharing a traumatic experience. Everything is engineered by the Legion to institutionally integrate the legionnaires and build a kind of unity out of diversity. Amalgam, discipline, and the exclusive use of French are some of the key drivers of integration. Beyond these structural factors, the narrative used by the Legion helps to develop a strong collective identity that steadily reinforces the brotherhood of its members. As a result, the process is both enforced and inherited by the legionnaires themselves. Initially driven by the Legion to ensure crucial integration, the process assumes an almost independent dynamic with the legionnaires as the main actors working to develop a collective identity. The challenge for the Legion is to sustain this dynamic in order to preserve the cohesiveness of the unit, as well as the dedication of its members. With the benefit of this study, it is also easier to understand the slough of any recruit transforming into a legionnaire as an enduring process whose results can vary depending on time and individual temperaments. In return, the Legion is obliged to constantly enforce the primacy of the community upon individuals.

Overall, the secret alchemy of this process perhaps also relies on the legionnaires themselves. These men, whose fate has led them to choose the Legion, whatever the risks and the sacrifices, may have in common a similar “gene” that inherently favors their collective identity. This enigma is emphasized by George Manue who, as a legionnaire, will have the last word of this paper.

Ardent characters, tempted by misfortune, weak souls crushed by liberty, searching for a framework for their dreams, aristocrats or paupers, leveled by the uniform, all legionnaires are united by the same pride, the same secret aspirations, the same desires, the same needs; Pushed by the same male forces, physical and moral, they are united outside of ordinary conventions upon the plan of the great human laws.⁶⁸

-
- ⁴ Definition provided by *La documentation française*.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership: A Dynamic View* (San Francisco : Jossey-Bass, 1992), 9.
- ⁷ Karina Korostelina, *Social Identity and Conflict : Structures, Dynamics, and Implications* (New York, NY : Harper Collins, 1991), 15.
- ⁸ Ibid., 22.
- ⁹ Douglas Porch, *The French Foreign Legion, a complete history of the legendary fighting force* (New York (NY): Harper Collins, 1991), 28.
- ¹⁰ Alexis Neviaski, *Képi Blanc, Casque d'Acier et Croix Gammée: subversion au Coeur de la Légion Etrangère* (Paris: Fayard, 2012), 18-22, 338.
- ¹¹ Georges R. Manue, *Têtes Brûlées* (Paris : Nouvelle Société d'Éditions, 1929), quoted from Jean Hallo, *Monsieur Légionnaire* (Paris: Lavauzelle, 1994), 21.
- ¹² Prince Aage de Danemark, *Souvenirs de la Légion Etrangère 1922-1926* (Paris: Bernard Giovanangeli Editeur, 2009), 187.
- ¹³ Translated from a famous Foreign Legion song.
- ¹⁴ Quoted by Roger de Beauvoir, *Légion Etrangère* (Paris : Firmin-Didot, 1897).
- ¹⁵ Foreign Legion code of honor, cf. appendix B.
- ¹⁶ Translated from a famous Foreign Legion song.
- ¹⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).
- ¹⁸ Karina Korostelina, 19.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., 24.
- ²⁰ Foreign Legion code of honor, cf. appendix B.
- ²¹ Geoffrey Bocca, *La Légion! The French Foreign Legion and the Men Who Made It Glorious* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1964), 26.
- ²² Quoted from Général Christophe de Saint Chamas, *Legio Patria Nostra, la Légion Etrangère, une exception Française*, conference “Regards croisés sur la Légion Etrangère,” October 12, 2012.
- ²³ Colonel de Villebois-Mareuil, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, April 15, 1896.
- ²⁴ Ana Pouvreau, *Le Système Légion: un modèle d'intégration des jeunes étrangers* (Sceaux: L'esprit du Livre, 2008), 18.
- ²⁵ Stéphane Jarlaud, *La Formation de Base des Engagés Volontaires de la Légion Etrangère* (Master's thesis: Political Studies Institute of Toulouse, 1992), 108-109.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Stéphane Jarlaud, 110.
- ²⁸ French Foreign Legion directive on initial training, updated on August 18, 2014.
- ²⁹ Philippe Chasseriaud, *L'évolution des Relations socio-affectives intra et interculturelles à la Légion Etrangère* (Military master's thesis: Enseignement Militaire Supérieur Scientifique et Technique, 2003), 125.
- ³⁰ Ana Pouvreau, 133-135.
- ³¹ Quoted from Ana Pouvreau, 138.
- ³² Philippe Chasseriaud, 129.
- ³³ Jean Hallo, 92.
- ³⁴ Antoine Sylvère, *Le Légionnaire Flutsch* (Paris : Plon, 1980), quoted from Jean Hallo, 92.
- ³⁵ Quoted from Geoffroy Bocca, 285.
- ³⁶ Hervé Pierre, “Discipline et Esprit de Corps,” *Revue de la Défense Nationale* n°750, May 2012.
- ³⁷ Jean Hallo, 96.

-
- ³⁸ Foreign Legion code of honor, see appendix B.
- ³⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Raison Pratique: Sur la théorie de l'action* (Paris: Seuil, 2014), 153.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 121.
- ⁴¹ Maxim from Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus (1466-1536).
- ⁴² Pierre Sergent, *La Légion* (Paris: Lafayette, 1985), 304.
- ⁴³ Elisabeth Ferrand, *Un Cérémonial Legionnaire: la Remise du Képi Blanc* (Master's thesis, Political Studies Institute of Toulouse, 1968), 40.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ Pierre Mac Orlan, *Légionnaires* (Paris: éditions du Capitole, 1930), 208.
- ⁴⁶ Foreign Legion code of honor, see appendix B.
- ⁴⁷ Read the *New York Times*, December 15, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/16/us/a-deserter-who-chased-conflict-is-jailed-for-shirking-duty.html?_r=0
- ⁴⁸ 2LT Lawrence J. Franks Jr., Personal Statement to the Military Judge and Panel Members Prior to Sentencing, December 15, 2014.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid.
- ⁵⁰ George R. Manue in *Le Monde*, April 30, 1963, 3.
- ⁵¹ Edgar Schein, 9.
- ⁵² Emile Henriot, *Vers l'Oasis* (Paris : Plon, 1935), 199.
- ⁵³ Général Christophe de Saint Chamas, *Legio Patria Nostra, la Légion Etrangère, une exception Française*, conference "Regards croisés sur la Légion Etrangère," October 12, 2012.
- ⁵⁴ Pierre Mac Orlan, 87-88.
- ⁵⁵ Général Christophe de Saint Chamas, *Legio Patria Nostra, la Légion Etrangère, une exception Française*, conference "Regards croisés sur la Légion Etrangère," October 12, 2012.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid.
- ⁵⁷ Charles Ardant du Picq, *Etudes sur le combat, Combat antique et combat moderne* (Paris : Editions Ivrea, 1999), 75-76.
- ⁵⁸ Translated from a Foreign Legion's song.
- ⁵⁹ Jean-Eric Lundy, *Rapports du tatouage au Contrat Narcissique dans la Légion Etrangère* (Psychiatric master's thesis, Centre d'études spécialisées de Psychiatrie de Paris, 1989), 56.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., 57.
- ⁶¹ Andrew Lang, *The Secret of the Totem* (London: Longman, Greens and Co, 1905), 35.
- ⁶² Jean-Eric Lundy, 119.
- ⁶³ Ibid., 120.
- ⁶⁴ Geoffroy Bocca, 37.
- ⁶⁵ Georges Manue, 107.
- ⁶⁶ Adrian Liddell Hart, quoted from Douglas Porch, 427.
- ⁶⁷ Adrian Liddell Hart, quoted from Douglas Porch, 439.
- ⁶⁸ Georges Manue, quoted from Douglas Porch, 427.

Bibliography

English sources:

- Books:

Bocca, Geoffrey. *La Légion! The French Foreign Legion and the Men Who Made It Glorious*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1964.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.

Geraghty, Tony. *A New History of the French Foreign Legion*. New York (NY): Facts on File Publications, 1987.

Korostelina, Karina. *Social Identity and Conflict: Structures, Dynamics, and Implications*. New York, NY : Harper Collins, 1991.

Lang, Andrew. *The Secret of the Totem*. London: Longman, Greens and Co, 1905.

Porch, Douglas. *The French Foreign Legion, a complete history of the legendary fighting force*. New York (NY): Harper Collins, 1991.

Schein, Edgar. *Organizational Culture and Leadership: A Dynamic View*. San Francisco : Jossey-Bass, 1992.

Young, John Robert. *The French Foreign Legion, the inside story of the world-famous fighting force*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1984.

- Documentary:

Elisabeth Nord, "French Foreign Legion, Tougher Than the Rest," released in October 2007.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELi7cC85ew4>

French sources:

- Books:

Aage de Danemark, Prince. *Souvenirs de la Légion Etrangère, 1922-1926*. Paris: Bernard Giovanangeli, 2009.

Ardant du Picq, Charles. *Etudes sur le combat, Combat antique et combat moderne*. Paris : Editions Ivrea, 1999.

Comor, André-Paul. *La Légion Etrangère: Histoire et Dictionnaire*. Paris: Laffont, 2013.

Hallo, Jean. *Monsieur Légionnaire*. Paris: Lavauzelle, 1994. Italiques, ed. *Légion Notre Mère: Anthologie de la Poésie Légionnaire, 1885-2003*. Paris: Italiques, 2003.

Henriot, Emile. *Vers l'Oasis*. Paris : Plon, 1935.

Mac Orlan, Pierre. *Légionnaires*. Paris: éditions du Capitole, 1930.

Manue, Georges R. *Têtes Brûlées*. Paris : Nouvelle Société d'Éditions, 1929.

Neviaski, Alexis. *Képi Blanc, Casque d'Acier et Croix Gammée: subversion au Coeur de la Légion Etrangère*. Paris: Fayard, 2012.

Pouvreau, Ana. *Le Système Légion: un modèle d'intégration des jeunes étrangers*. Sceaux: L'esprit du Livre, 2008.

Sergent, Pierre. *La Légion*. Paris: Lafayette, 1985.

Sylvère, Antoine. *Le Légionnaire Flutsch*. Paris : Plon, 1980.

- **Students' thesis:**

Jarlaud, Stéphane. "La Formation de Base des Engagés Volontaires de la Légion Etrangère." Master's thesis, Political Studies Institute of Toulouse, 1992.

Larroumet, Marie. "Coutumes et Traditions de la Légion Etrangère." History master's thesis, University of Paris, 1992.

Lundy, Jean-Eric. "Rapports du tatouage au Contrat Narcissique dans la Légion Etrangère." Psychiatric master's thesis, Centre d'études spécialisées de Psychiatrie de Paris, 1989.

Radene, Marie. "La Légion Etrangère: Problèmes Humains, Politiques & Sociaux – Perspectives Nouvelles en 1963." Master's thesis, Political Studies Institute of Aix-Marseille, 1963.

Chassériaud, Philippe. "L'évolution des Relations socio-affectives intra et interculturelles à la Légion Etrangère." Military master's thesis, Enseignement Militaire Supérieur Scientifique et Technique, 2003.

Ferrand, Elisabeth. "Un Cérémonial Legionnaire: la Remise du Képi Blanc." Master's thesis, Political Studies Institute of Toulouse, xxxx.

- **Articles:**

Pierre, Hervé. "Discipline et Esprit de Corps," *Revue de la Défense Nationale* n°750, May 2012.

Saint Chamas, Christophe de. "Legio Patria Nostra, la Légion Etrangère, une exception Française," conference "Regards croisés sur la Légion Etrangère," October 12, 2012.

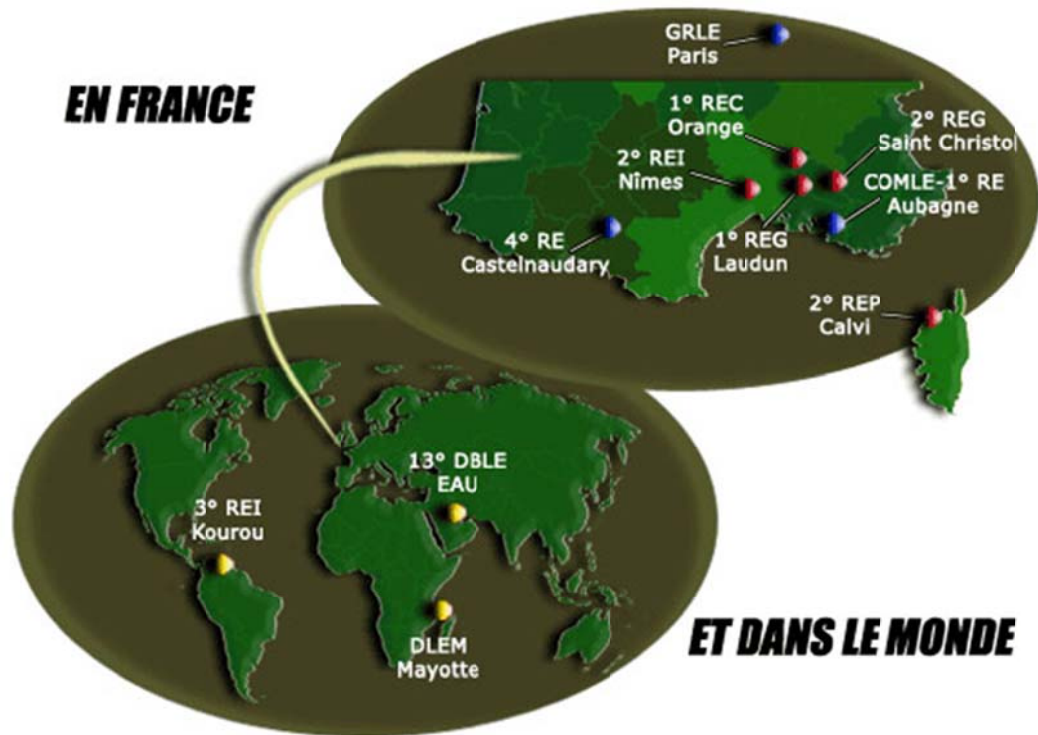
- **Military publication:**

Mathonnière, Julien. "La Légion étrangère: de l'Originalité d'un Corps Atypique de l'Armée de Terre." Unpublished manuscript, property of the French Foreign Legion historical center.

French Foreign Legion directive on initial training, updated on August 18, 2014.

APPENDIX A: THE LEGION AROUND THE WORLD

The French Foreign Legion is a combat force, composed of foreigners under French command. It is an integral part of the Army and represents 7% of its numbers or 7,200 men.



APPENDIX B: FOREIGN LEGION'S CODE OF HONOR

THE CODE OF HONOUR OF THE LEGIONNAIRE

- I -

Legionnaire, you are a volunteer serving France with honour and fidelity

- II -

Each legionnaire is your brother in arms, whatever his nationality, race or religion. You always show him the close solidarity which unites the members of a family.

- III -

Respectful of traditions, faithful to your leaders, discipline and camaraderie are your strength; courage and loyalty your virtues.

- IV -

Proud to be a legionnaire, you display it in your impeccable uniforms, your always worthy, but modest behaviour and your always neat living quarters.

- V -

As an elite soldier, you train with rigour, you maintain your weapon as your most valued possession, you are constantly concerned with your physical fitness.

- VI -

The mission is sacred, you execute it to the end and, if need be, when duty calls, at the risk of your life.

- VII -

In combat, you act without passion and without hatred, you respect defeated enemies, you never abandon your dead, your wounded or your weapons.



Our code of honour truly reflects the legionnaire's true Nature. Thus, a true legionnaire identifies with the way he applies each of these principles.



APPENDIX C1: EXAMPLES OF LEGION'S CHRISTMAS CRIBS



APPENDIX C2: CAMERON

Every April 30, the Foreign Legion celebrates the heroic battle of Cameron, which took place in 1863 during the Mexican campaign. This commemoration is the opportunity to emphasize the soldiering virtues of the Legion, as well as the oath to the given word.

During the celebration, the woven hand of the Captain Danjou, who was the commanding officer during the battle, is exhibited as a sacred relic to all the legionnaires.

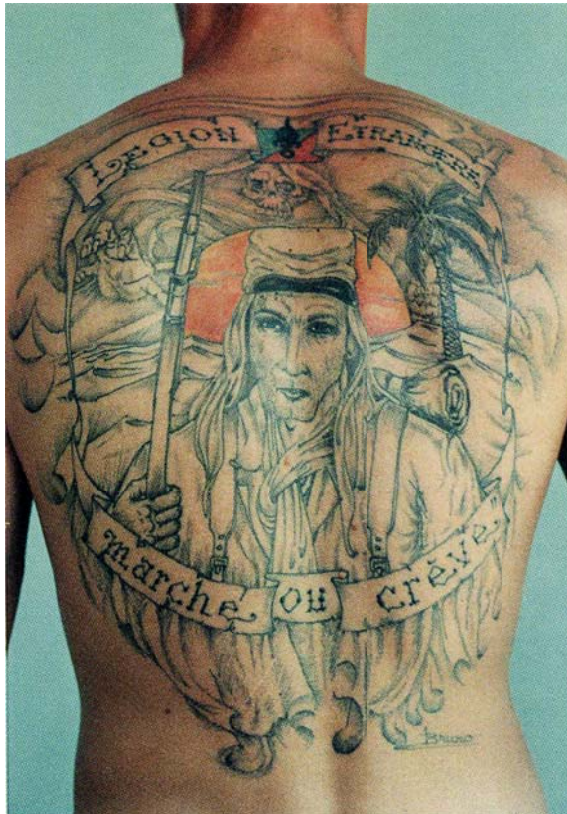


APPENDIX D: PRESENTATION TO THE WHITE KEPI

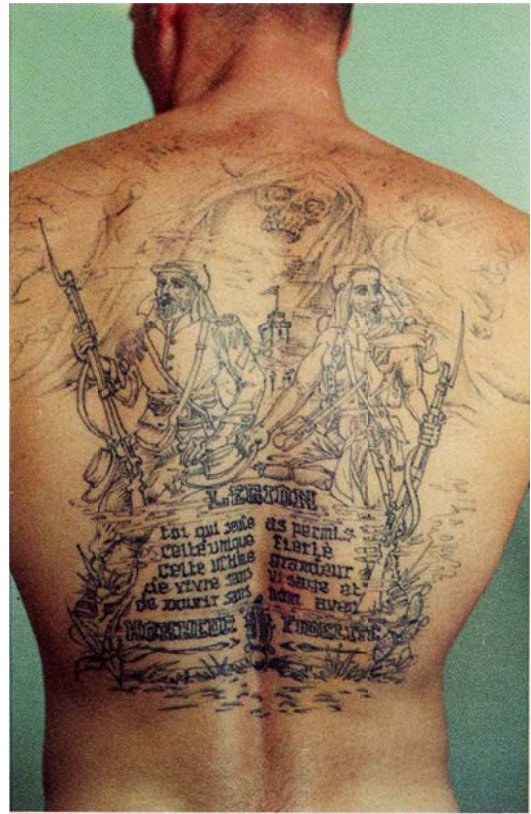
At the end of their initial training, legionnaires cover their head for the first time with the white kepi, symbolizing from there their real belonging to the Foreign Legion.



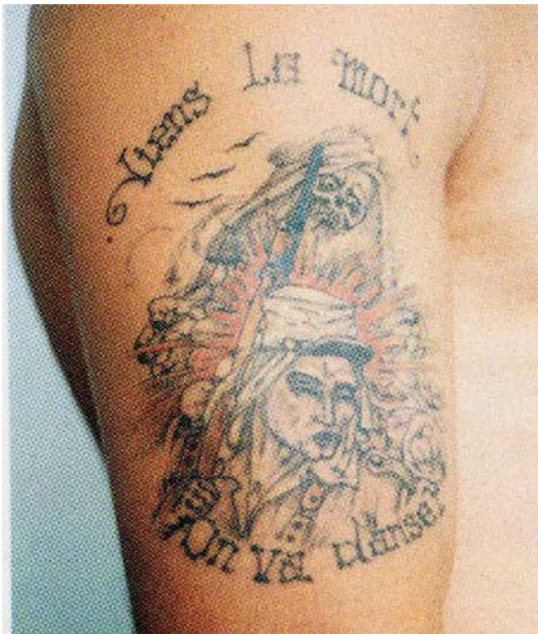
APPENDIX E: TATTOOS AND SENSE OF REDEMPTION IN THE LEGION



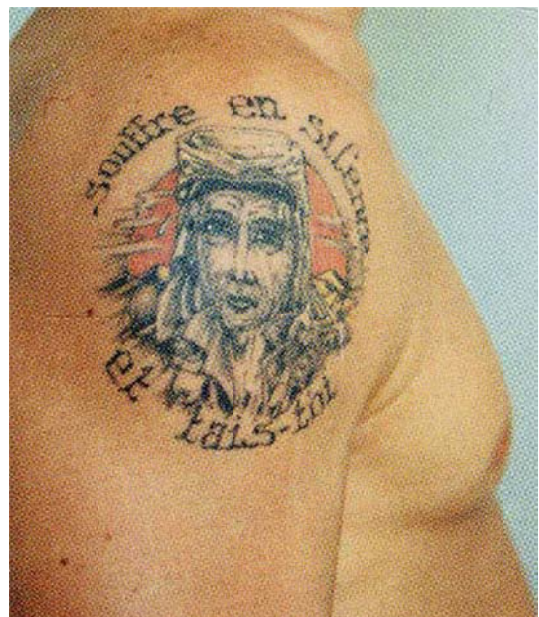
"Foreign Legion, March or Die"



"Legion, which allowed this unique pride and ultimate virtue to live without any face and to die without any name with honor and fidelity"



"Come on death, let's dance"



"Suffer in silence and shut up"